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FREE GRACE EXALTED,
AND
THE PROPER USE
OF
THE MORAL LAW EVINCED:
IN

A Sermon,

On ROMANS, chap. viii. ver. 3, 4.

BY

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*For the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by
Jesus Christ.—John i. 17.*

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FREE GRACE EXALTED,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

FOR WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO, IN THAT IT WAS WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH, GOD, SENDING HIS OWN SON, IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, AND FOR SIN, CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH: THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 3, 4.

IN this incomparable epistle, the great Apostle to the Gentiles hath discussed, in a most masterly manner, the subject of the moral state of mankind universally; and so demonstratively exhibited the universal depravity and moral turpitude of human nature, as to evince the utter impossibility of either the Gentiles by the law of nature, or the Jews by the law of Moses, ever recommending themselves to the favor of God, or obtaining justification and acceptance with him.—This topic particularly occupies the first, second and third chapters.—He has likewise, as a true evangelist, very satisfactorily proved, both from scripture and reason, another very important point, which is particularly dear to all the saints, viz. The entire and complete justification, and final secu-

riety of every one who truly believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is particularly demonstrated in the fourth and fifth chapters.—The Apostle afterwards defends his doctrine from the unreasonable charge of licentiousness, and shews that this alone can give security for pure and undisguised morality. So that this epistle contains a complete system of the most pure and sublime divinity that ever the world was favored with.

The entire justification of all true believers is illustrated by a familiar argument drawn from the conjugal law, chap. vii. ver. 1, 2, 3, 4. A woman, by that law, is bound to her husband so long as he liveth, so that she can neither dispose of her person, liberty, nor property, but in submission to her husband's will: But if the husband die, the law dies with him, and every obligation to that law ceases, as though it had never been, and the woman is as much at liberty as though she never had been bound. So, "ye, my brethren, are become dead to the law, by the (death) of the body of Christ, (for the legal institution died with him) that ye should be married unto another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." The Apostle farther illustrates this subject from the 7th verse of the 7th chapter, by introducing his own experience, which is indeed the experience

rience of every one who is taught of God ; and in the 1st verse of the 8th chapter, he draws an inference from the foregoing arguments, “ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” &c.

In the words of our text we have a brief summary of the whole process of the economy of grace ; in discussing of which we may,

First—Take notice of man’s moral inability, expressed in these words, “ What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.”

Secondly—Of the grand and ample provision which God hath made “ In sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh.” &c.

Thirdly—The ultimate end and design of the whole, “ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

I. Let us then, in the first place, consider what the law could not do, and why.—But here it may be necessary to explain the term, and affix the meaning to the word *law*.—The term *law*, as expressive of a system, or code, of moral, or positive precepts, or obligations, has a threefold acceptation in scripture, which are termed Judicial, Ceremonial, and Moral.

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The Judicial Law, is that which respected the civil and political government of the Jewish nation, which took cognizance of men's conduct, and had the power of life and death. Heb. x. 28.

The Ceremonial Law, is that typical economy which was a shadow of good things to come, and included all the religious observances and ceremonies which continued among the Jews, from Moses to the coming of Christ. Gal. iii. 24.

The Moral-Law, contains those divine and moral obligations which were implanted in the first principles; and constitution of our first parents in Paradise; which are now dispersed throughout the book of divine revelation, and are summed up in that brief and comprehensive decalogue, which was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, written on stone. Exodus xx.

It is the latter sense of the word *law*, that is meant in the text, as is evident from the seventh verse of the seventh chapter, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet."—This is evidently a quotation from the decalogue: But we may extend the meaning to any possible latitude, and comprehend every kind of sense which may be devised.—Let it be the angelic *law*, the Adamic *law*, the *law* of nature, the *law* of divine revelation, or the evangelical *law*; yea, the gospel of
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of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if it be considered only as a mere system of moral ethics, abstracted from the doctrine of atonement and the aid of divine inspiration, will come under the same predicament: for, indeed, the morality of the gospel is the same as the morality of the law. Christ taught no new morals, only cleared the old ones from the false glosses of the Jewish rabbies, and enforced them by new and evangelical motives and sanctions.

But what could not the law do? I answer, it could neither justify nor sanctify; it could not give a man acceptance with God, power over himself, peace of conscience, nor any well-grounded hope in a dying hour. The *law* could not justify, because it could not sanctify. If justification were by the law, it must be by a perfect observance of it. Every law, both human and divine, demands perfect obedience. To transgress the law is to be condemned by it; and future obedience can never make atonement for past transgressions, by that law which condemns; and which ought always to have been obeyed: But this will yet appear in a stronger light if we consider man's moral inability to keep the law.

Why cannot the law justify?—Not because of any inability in itself, nor because of any change
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that has passed on it. It is still, as it has ever been, a transcript of the divine mind ; and bears, immutably, the strongest resemblance of its divine author : “ It is spiritual, holy, just, and good.” Rom. vii. 12. It can never be abrogated to all eternity ; nor can its vigour abate. It is as able to justify now as ever it was, all who obey it ; and it is also as able to condemn. But herein is its weakness ; “ It is weak through the flesh.” Any law, given to creatures circumstanced as we are, must be liable to the same disadvantages. There is a twofold inability in man, 1st, A want of power ; 2dly, A want of will, or inclination. The first of these is sadly known and lamentably expressed by the apostle, and likewise by every experimental christian, as Rom. vii. 15. “ For what I would that do I not ; but what I hate that do I.”—Ver. 19, “ For the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do.”—Ver. 21, “ I find then a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me.”—Ver. 24, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”—If the best of characters, who have made the most faithful trial, and have long maintained the conflict, have been constrained to make this honest confession of the want of power ; what must be the case with others who have not made that trial ? Their strength is not greater ; but their knowledge of themselves

themselves is much less.—All the boasting encomiums, and all the flattering ideas, which men have entertained of their own natural moral virtue, have originated in ignorance, and will terminate in despair.—There is also a want of will, or inclination, to the law of God; which is what St. Paul calls “the carnal mind.” Rom. viii. 7, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”—There is in human nature a contrariety to God, and to his law; which discovers itself in that sad propensity to evil, and aversion to that which is good, which is innate in us: we derive it from our parents, it is mixt with our very blood, and respired with every breath.—We need not a more melancholy instance of enmity to God than that natural aversion to religion which so universally prevails: So that the most persuasive arguments, the most engaging promises, the most pressing invitations, the most powerful sanctions, are wasted upon the greatest part of mankind; so that neither duty nor interest, regard to God, their neighbour, nor themselves; desires of future happiness, nor the fears of damnation, will prevail with them to hearken to divine counsels, or to regard the divine law.—And this is not the case of one, two, three, or a thousand only, but the scripture asserts, “all flesh hath corrupted its way, all are become unprofitable;”

profitable ;" and universal observation and experience corroborate the divine testimony, which declares that, " God hath made of one blood all nations of men." Acts xvii. 26.—Human nature is the same every where.—There is an exact agreement in the moral state of mankind in all ages and all nations.

So that, in order to be justified by the law, there is a vast deal of work to be done.—We must first of all purge our own hearts, remove the enmity which is there against the law of God, and make all our motives, passions, and principles, perfectly straight with that perfect rule. 2dly, We must render perfect and unflinching obedience for the time to come, and 3dly, we must perform such works of supererogation as may make satisfaction for the sins that are past. From all this we conclude, that, " by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," (in the sight of God.) Rom. iii. 20.

It consequently follows, that the law could not give a man power over himself. " For by the law is (only) the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. not deliverance from it. The law can only expose the wound, it cannot heal.—This is manifest in the history of all the world, but especially of the Pharisees and Essenes among the Jews, and the
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most eminent of the Philosophers among the Gentiles, who after writing excellent precepts for the government of others, were not able to govern themselves: and while they saw and lamented the depravity of human nature, were not able to rid themselves of its shackles.

It consequently follows likewise, that the law could not give peace of conscience. I do not say that conscience may not be numbed, yea, seared as with a red hot iron, so as to become insensible to its state and dangers, but this cannot be called the peace of God in the conscience; it ought rather to be called stupidity.—True peace of mind springs from conviction of the truth, and not a blindness to it.—Now that the law cannot give true peace of conscience is evident from the aforementioned propositions.—“For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Rom. iii. 20.—If the law could not justify before God, nor give a man victory over himself, how then can it possibly afford true peace in the conscience?—“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, (by conviction) sin revived and I died.”—I am persuaded that those who make the most faithful experiment will find, after the exertion of their utmost efforts, that the law, like the Egyptian task-masters, will be ever accusing them with, “ye are idle, ye are idle.”

idle."—By the very same rule, the law could not give a well grounded hope of better things to come, in a dying hour. I have very often heard persons speak of looking back with pleasure on a well spent life, when they come to lay upon their death bed, and this is to give them a comfortable hope beyond the grave.—This appears to be one of those pretty compositions of words of course, which have no meaning in them; and though often founded from the pulpit, I venture to assert, that they are calculated to lead the mind into damnable delusions, even to the denying of the Lord that bought them. A well spent life! where do we find it?—I know of no well spent life but one, and that was the life of Jesus Christ.—God forbid that I should discourage the attempt to live well! I only say there never was, there is not, there never will be, a merely human life without manifold blemishes and imperfections, and consequently *that* life cannot, in a retrospect view, give solid peace of conscience in the last moments.

It may be granted, indeed, that the life which terminates in genuine repentance and saving faith, has in a sense been spent well, because it is brought to a good issue; and the earlier in life this faith and repentance took place the better.—But yet, I presume, the true penitent is so far
from

from making these the ground of his acceptance, or the matter of his boast, that he acknowledges his repentance to be a deep remorse which arises from a consciousness of his having lived ill; and his faith is the entire renunciation of his own partial and imperfect righteousness, to trust the righteousness of another, even the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Thus then we have seen what the law could not do, and why.—Suffer me, before I proceed, to make some application of what has been said.

1st. If there is any truth or propriety in what has been advanced, then it inevitably follows, that all those who are seeking acceptance with God by any thing they are capable of doing, are just in the same state the Jewish pharisees were in, *i. e.* “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Rom. x. 3.—It is not enough to say that your obedience is evangelical obedience, because the precepts you observe, are found in the new testament.—It has been shewn that the morality of the law and the gospel are both one; and to render your obedience truly evangelical, you must have an evangelical faith, even faith in the blood and righteousness

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ness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is to all and upon all them that believe.

Your best obedience without this, will amount to no more than those "deeds of the law by which no flesh living shall be justified."—You will never attain a justifying righteousness this way, "because you seek it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Rom. ix. 32.

2dly. How exceedingly wrong are those teachers who represent Jesus Christ as no more than a reformer of mankind, a teacher of morals. The scripture says, "He came not to destroy men's lives but to save." Luke ix. 56. But, if he be no more than a teacher of morality, I would say he came not to save but to destroy, at least, to torment them before their time: For, to enlarge upon the subject of duty, to persons circumstanced as we have seen all men are, is no better than to mock their misery, and to sport with their distresses.

3dly. Thus, my brethren, we see, that those teachers who never say any thing about our Lord Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice, however fine spun their systems may be, are not preachers of the gospel, but of the law, and God hath said, "they shall not profit the people."

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Jer. xxiii. 32. Might I be permitted to advise, I would say, hear them not; or at least, “take heed how and what ye hear.” “Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.” Whoever that teacher may be, however great the offices he may fill, or the titles he may sustain, if he is leading you to lean on any thing you have done, or any thing you can do, for acceptance with God, you may depend on it, he is deceiving your precious soul; the worst of all deceptions.

4thly. Take heed how you attempt to lay another foundation than that which God has laid, which is Christ Jesus the Lord.—Be assured of it, the best, the most perfect obedience you can possibly render, will never be able to bear the scrutiny of a holy, heart searching, God, “by whom actions are weighed.” You must have another way to come to God than that of your own doings; what that way is shall be the subject of the second part of my discourse, which is the second thing I proposed to consider, viz.

II. The grand and ample provision God has made in “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, &c.”

The apostles language here is greatly to be admired. “God sending his *own Son*” τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν. *i. e. The Son of himself.* His Son in such a sense,

as

as no creature can possibly bear the appellation. Not intended to express *inferiority*, but rather *equality and unity of essence*. That Son which lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity. John i. 18. "Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person." Heb. i. 3.—So that he who hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father likewise. John xii. 45. and xiv. 9.

Every expression of the apostle in this part of our text, is pregnant with the most sublime matter, and might afford a separate discourse of itself.

"God's sending his *own Son* is the greatest wonder in earth or heaven. It is such an expression of his love, that it admits of no comparison. "God *so* loved the world, &c." John iii. 16.—Had he given heaven and earth for our redemption, it would have been far less than giving his *own Son*.

"In the likeness of sinful flesh."—Not sinful flesh, but in the likeness of it—Christ contracted no pollution, nor did he loose any of his glories by taking human flesh. He only veiled his glories, to bear our sins and infirmities. He was always "without sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."—But he had all the external appearances of a sinner, in sufferings and death. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." *i. e.* He was

was in all respects treated as a sinner. He was treated as a sinner by the creatures he had made:—He was charged with treason, insurrection, necromancy, and blasphemy.—He was considered as an enemy both to church and state, to God and men; and for these false charges suffered the cruelest tortures, and the most shameful and bloody death.—So little justice is there in public opinion.

He was treated as a sinner by devils.—Satan assaulted him as he assaults all his disciples, and no doubt, for a time, with the hope of success. What did his spotless soul endure forty days and forty nights in the wilderness? In the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross?—“He was in all points tempted like as we are, only sin excepted.” Heb. iv. 15.—Let this console all the children of God. It is no sin then to be tempted. Jesus Christ hath trod the same thorny path before you, he knows how to sympathise with, and to deliver you.—He will be with you in all your tribulations, both in the fire and in the water. He will support and succour you, and “out of every temptation make a way for your escape.”—“He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear.” “He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”

Yea, God the Father treated him as a sinner, when he fulfilled his ancient prophecy. “Awake,

O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow." Zec. xiii. 7.—"It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief:" when, "he laid on him the iniquity of us all."—It was this that made him exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—The Jews thought he suffered justly, for his own crimes, "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."—So have many thought.—"But (this is a very capital mistake, for) he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."—Thus God sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to live a suffering life, and die like a malefactor. This helps to explain the following words: "And for sin"—*καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας*. This phrase in the old testament, is the usual phrase for a sin offering: So a bullock for a sin offering is *μόσχως περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, i. e. a bullock for sin, Lev. iv. 3, 18. and viii. 2, 14. and ix. 2, 8. and xvi. 3, 6, 9, 11, 27.—The lamb for a sin offering is *πρόβατον περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας*. Lev. iv. 32.—or *ἀμνὸς περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, a lamb for sin. Lev. v. 6, 7. Num. vi. 16.—So in like manner the goat, Lev. v. 6.—The dove, Lev. v. 7.—The sin offering is *το περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, Lev. v. 8, 9, 11. The same expression used in our text.

This gives us a proper and just idea of the nature of Christ's sufferings and death, namely,
that

that they were truly and properly vicarious; a sin offering, or a sacrifice for sin.—Not merely the effect of his pious zeal, O ye disciples of Socinus! if this were all, his sufferings would have little more efficacy than the sufferings of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs. O! blaspheme not the Saviour thus!—Those sufferings which attracted the astonishment of heaven and earth, which were the subject of so many prophecies from the beginning of the world, that had been prefigured by so many expensive ceremonies under the Levitical law. Were these but the sufferings of a martyr?—O! ye blaspheme!—That death, which caused the sun to hide his face, covered the heavens with blackness, shook the very foundations of the earth, rent the vail of the temple, opened the graves of the dead, and made the prisoners go forth; was this but the death of a martyr? O horrid blasphemy!—Think not, O ye Socinians, that ye compliment the Saviour by multiplying your fulsome encomiums on his piety and zeal, while ye deny his proper divinity, and rob him of the travail of his soul, the atoning merit of his sufferings and death!—Will *you* again robe him in mock royalty? and give him vinegar and gall to drink?—O cease your cruel sarcasms; ye are crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting him to an open shame.—If he died not as a sacrifice for sin, my soul is lost

for ever.—But “ ’twas for guilt, not innocence, he poured forth his life.” “ ’Twas guilt alone could justify his death, nor that unless his death could justify.”——A sacrifice for sin is in order to justify the sinner: but none of the sacrifices under the law were of sufficient merit to do this. They were only types of that all meritorious sacrifice, “ the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.”

“ My soul looks back to see,”

“ The burdens thou didst bear ;”

“ When hanging on the accursed tree,”

“ And hopes her guilt was there.”

Thus we find then, what the law could not do, God hath done, by making his Son an “ offering for sin.” viz. “ He hath condemned sin in the flesh.”—Here, sin appears to be personified under the character of a malefactor, who has been convicted of the crime alledged to his charge, and is now reserved in confinement under sentence of death; deprived of all power, authority, and liberty, and looking daily for the final execution of the sentence, which is to terminate his life.—Sin has done much mischief in God’s creation.—It has made sad havock of mankind, and has been particularly injurious to all the people of God. It is the prerogative of Jesus Christ alone to “ destroy the works of the devil,
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and to take away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.’

He saw, even in the realms of light and glory, the deplorable condition his people were in, and voluntarily undertook their redemption: he bowed the heavens also and came down, he laid aside his glory, made himself of no reputation, took the form of a servant; and humbled himself unto death, even to the death of the cross:—There, in their own nature, he bore his people’s curse, for “he was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—“He bore the sin of many.”—He engaged all the powers of hell, single handed, and overcame them.—He took the hand writing which was against his people, and nailed it to the cross with himself.—Thus forever blotting out their iniquities as a cloud, and their transgressions as a thick cloud. He entered the tomb, and thus perfumed the peaceful residence for all who die in the Lord.—Angels sung his triumphs when he rose, and with enraptured adoration, saw him drag his captives at his chariot wheels, chanting, “Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast obtained gifts (to bestow) among men, even the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them.”—God has now passed a final sentence upon sin, having condemned it in the flesh of his own Son; and

and it is said of all the saints, " Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." " Sin shall not reign in your mortal bodies."—The mischievous consequences of sin are all removed from the believer. In him the body (the strength) of sin is destroyed, that he should not serve sin; and the remainder is reserved for final execution.

Here then we see the grand and ample provision which God hath made for poor sinners, " in sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

What the law could not do he hath done.—
The law could not justify: but " all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 39.—" There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 1.—" Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Rom. iii. 24.

The Law could not sanctify—" But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.—" For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of

of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 11.—" By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Heb. x. 10. " For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Heb. x. 14.

The Law could not give a man power over himself.—But " If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." 2 Cor. v. 17.—" That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (*i. e.* his body) in sanctification and honour." 1 Theff. iv. 4.

The Law could not give peace of conscience—But, " being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. even " the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

The Law could not give a well grounded hope of better things to come.—" But we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. v. ii.—" In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Tit. i. 2.—" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
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to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5.—“ For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 2 Cor. v. 1.

III. The ultimate end and design of this wonderful economy of grace appears to be this:—“ That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—Τὸ δικαίωμα τῶ νόμου, *the righteousness of the law*, is an expression which occurs only here and in Rom. ii. 26. and signifies those internal principles of holiness, which are contained in, and expressed by the moral law.—Or should it be applied to the observance of the ceremonial law; in both senses the *law* receives its accomplishment. 1st, In that perfect obedience, and righteousness which Jesus Christ rendered in his own person for our justification, and which is made ours by faith in him. And 2dly, By the law of God being written in the hearts of all God’s children. Jer. xxxi. 33.—“ The love of God being shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them.” Rom. v. 5.—So that it appears to have been the design of the Almighty not

not only to save sinners by Jesus Christ in a way altogether consistent with his own moral perfections, and the purity of his own law, but also truly consistent with their own natural faculties, and with the proper order and fitness of things.—In the order of nature, and the fitness of things, holiness is essential to human happiness.—God himself, so to speak, cannot make any of his rational creatures happy, without making them holy.—In order to make a thing straight, irregularities, and crookedness, must be taken out of the way; and straightness is the immediate and inseparable effect.—In order to enjoy the blessing of light, darkness must be removed.—Sin and misery are inseparably connected, and so holiness and happiness. It does not appear to have been the design of the gospel, to make any change in the nature of things, any more than in the nature of God. God is as pure as ever he was, and sin is as much his abhorrence.—God is not less pure for being gracious, but sin is made appear thereby, “to be exceeding sinful.”—Herein appears to be the mistake, of all those who object to the moral law being a rule of life to the christian. They do not see the purity, the divinity, nor the eternal and unalterable obligations, of that law.—The law of God, and the mind of God, here, are one and the same thing: to be conformed to God, and to be conformed to the law, are one and the

same thing.—This is eternally binding upon men and angels.—The fall of angels, and of man, was by transgressing of this law, and they feel the miseries of it. The restoration of man is effected by a restoration to the law; not as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life, whereby he may know how to regulate the thoughts of his heart, the words of his mouth, and the actions of his life.—That he may know, “how he ought to walk and to please God,” in all things. 1 Thes. iv. 1.—Notwithstanding all the riches of divine grace, it still remains an unalterable fact, that “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. viii. 6, 7.—“If ye live after the flesh ye shall die,” and thereby prove that grace hath done nothing for you; “but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” Rom. viii. 13.—Hence it follows in our text, “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”

The term *Flesh* is very frequently used in the New Testament, and signifies all those base, sensual and vicious principles, which govern and influence the unregenerate man. It is a term very expressive and significant. For, the body, the
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mere corruptible, perishing, mortal *flesh*, is the grand object which engrosses all the cares, hopes and fears, of the unregenerate man. For this he rises early, and late takes rest.—To feed, to pamper, to decorate, to preserve, that corruptible carcase, which must presently tumble into the grave, in spite of all our pains, is the employment of the thoughts, desires, time and talents, of by far the greater part of mankind.—The carnal man lives wholly for himself, in the worst sense of the word ; hence, to get and keep, this present world, is what he is continually driving at.—Or, because he finds he cannot possess these things for ever, he will endeavour to perpetuate himself in his offspring, stamp his name upon his estates, and finds it his greatest satisfaction in his last moments, that he has heirs who will personate himself, and transmit his memory to the latest posterity.

This is living after the flesh, *i. e.* the body has the ascendancy of the soul.—As for the soul, it is seldom thought of, or if at all, it is with great indifferency.

The man finds a strong propensity to leave all his spiritual and immortal concerns, (if he thinks he has any) to the mere absolute unknown mercy of God: he is not willing that any of these should interrupt his present enjoyments.—This is

a mere brutish life ; and this is the life of by far the greatest part of the world.

But not so the christian.—“ He walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”—“ He was once in the flesh, then he minded the things of the flesh :” “ But now he is after the spirit, he minds the things of the Spirit.” Walking after the Spirit, implies 1st, Making the bible the rule of our conduct, because the bible is the revelation of the Spirit, and the only rule the Spirit has given for both faith and practice. 2dly, Walking after the Spirit implies, walking by, or under the guidance of, a divine agent, no less than the Spirit of God himself.—“ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. viii. 14.—It is the Spirit of God which hath led them to the knowledge of themselves, and to deep compunction of soul for their iniquities. 2dly, It is the Spirit of God who hath revealed Christ in their hearts, hath led them to see the completeness of his righteousness and merit, and to venture on him alone for salvation.—3dly, It is the Spirit who hath “ shed abroad the love of God in their hearts,” and taught them to “ love Christ, because he hath first loved them ;” and to love the brethren, yea all men, even their vilest enemies, for Christ’s sake. 4thly, It is the “ Spirit of God which worketh in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,” to “ worship
God

God in spirit and in truth, “ to cleanse from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God;” teaching them “ that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Thus the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, in the subjects of free grace, to the glory of God, and the consummation of their happiness, to all eternity.

Suffer me now to make an observation or two by way of inference.

1st, May I not challenge the whole universe to produce any thing capable of being compared with that system of doctrine contained in the sacred gospel, so truly worthy of God, so beneficial to mankind.—The depraved debilitated state of human nature, as we have viewed it, is confirmed by the universal observation and experience of all ages and all climates.—If precept and example made all the difference which is to be seen in certain characters, we might then hope
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to find, somewhere, a nation, or an island, whose inhabitants were all virtuous, wise and good:— But the contrary is the fact, that “all flesh hath corrupted its way,” and that by nature there are none righteous, none that doeth good, no not one.”—This is a truth then founded in fact.

2dly, How truly sublime it is to view the Almighty concerned for the miseries of his fallen creatures, and undertaking, and effecting, their recovery in person, in a way so consistent with his own attributes, and with the righteousness of his moral government.

3dly, What an everlasting source of consolation is here found for the guilty and the wretched, who know and feel their miseries. Are there any here who are asking “what must I do to be saved.”—How salutary, how suitable the reply of the gospel.—“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

4thly, How unjustly is this system censured with the charge of licentiousness.—This system produces the most pure and refined morality.

“Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding love!
Thou maker of new morals to mankind,
The true morality is love of thee!”

5thly,

5thly, Finally, my brethren; let us rejoice, for the “ grace which is brought unto us by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”—Let us “ stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”—Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:”—“ That ye may shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. AMEN.

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